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# Spy Suspect's Ex-Wife Tells Of Warning So He Could Flee

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WEST DENNIS, Mass., June 20 — Barbara Walker, the former wife of John A. Walker Jr., who is charged with spying, says she sent him a warning after she turned him in to the Federal Bureau of Investigation on the assumption that he would flee to the Soviet Union to avoid prosecution.

"I wanted to give John a chance to run," she said in an interview here. "That bond goes a lot deeper than you think."

But, two months ago, in their last face-to-face meeting, Mrs. Walker said, she assured him she had not, in fact, told the F.B.I. that she suspected him of running an espionage ring since 1967. Mr. Walker has pleaded not guilty to charges of spying.

Mrs. Walker cited this contradictory behavior as an example of the feelings that have pushed her one way and then another since she made her first call to the bureau in November 1984.

Now, Mrs. Walker confirmed in her most extensive interview since the Walker spy case thrust her into prominence, she is devoting most of her energy to maintaining her privacy and trying to disentangle her 22-year-old son from involvement in the case.

Toward that goal, Mrs. Walker disclosed that she was considering withholding her testimony against her former husband unless Government prosecutors agreed to grant immunity to her son, Michael, a Navy yeoman. He is currently being held on espionage charges and stands accused of providing classified Navy documents to his father for sale to Soviet agents.

She said that for some months, the bureau did not believe her. In part, she said, because she had been drinking in the hours before she called the F.B.I. and freely admitted this to the agent.

These and other points about the Walker spy case and family ordeal emerged Tuesday and Wednesday days in the course of interviews with Mrs. Walker that took place at the beach near her apartment, at a hotel in Hyannis and at her brother's home in Boston. At times laughing and at other times near tears, Mrs. Walker said her marriage deteriorated as her husband plunged deeper into his secret life.

The Walkers were divorced nine years ago, and Mrs. Walker, 47 years old, lives in struggling circumstances on Cape Cod, with her 26-year-old daughter Cynthia and her grandson.

## Told Children About Father

On Tuesday, as she watched her daughter Laura condemn John Walker on a nationally televised religious program, Mrs. Walker disclosed that she told each of her four children that their father was a spy during their teen-age years.

"All I tried to do was tell them their father was not a good person but he was still their father," she said. Michael, who craved attention that he rarely got from his father, was 17 when she told him, she said, adding: "He was shattered. He couldn't believe it."

As Laura Walker Snyder gave a dramatic rendition of the family plight, her mother, dressed in a red T-shirt and blue slacks, shook her head in disbelief and sometimes retorted at the screen.

An articulate woman, with a sardonic sense of humor and an overriding sense of duty to her four grown children, Mrs. Walker said finding out about her husband's espionage activities forced her to make difficult choices. Knowing about the activities, yet covering them up "became a way of life," she said.

## Calls F.B.I. in November

She said she picked up the telephone last November and called the F.B.I. a few hours after receiving a call from Mrs. Snyder. Mrs. Walker said she had not heard from her daughter in 16 months and did not know where she was living despite constant searching.

She knew Mrs. Snyder's testimony would strengthen her case against her husband, and her daughter's emergence fortified her in her resolve to do what she had contemplated many times, Mrs. Walker said.

When Mrs. Snyder was in the Army in 1979, her father tried to recruit her to spy, Mrs. Walker said, and therefore "Laura knew more about certain information that John wanted than I did."

"I couldn't give information on what he sold," she said.

## Moved to Break Silence

She was also moved to break her silence by her daughter's marital situation, she said. Mrs. Snyder reminded her that her estranged husband, Phillip Snyder, was keeping their young son and that he was threatening to report Mr. Walker to the authorities if her daughter tried to take the child, Mrs. Walker said. Mrs. Snyder made the same charge on the broadcast, and Mr. Snyder has denied making such a threat.

Mrs. Walker said she was seeking to hire a lawyer to represent Mrs. Snyder and herself. "I want the best," she said, but added her financial situation precluded her from paying for legal services. A public defender in Baltimore has been assigned to Michael's case.

In the interviews she often said that much would come out at the trial that she could not talk about now. In answer to questions about specific drop sites or specific Soviet contacts, she said: "I can't answer that."

While unwilling to volunteer an estimate of how much Mr. Walker might have been paid by the Russians, she agreed that \$1 million seemed a "realistic" figure.

"The Russians don't write checks," she said with a laugh. "They do give you American money."

Mrs. Walker said her former husband first made contact with the Russians some time in late 1967, when a bar the couple started in Charleston, S.C., two years earlier went sour. The Federal authorities have said since his arrest that John Walker may have spied for the Soviet Union even before this date, perhaps more than 20 years ago.

Instead of filing for bankruptcy and starting afresh, as she wanted, her husband, who was a Navy warrant officer and a communications specialist, insisted on leasing the bar operation. Thereafter, she said, the fact that people thought they owned the bar became a convenient way to explain their flashy life style, which contrasted starkly with that of most Navy families.

"Remember, he flew a plane, sailed a boat, and drove a sports car," Mrs. Walker said of her former husband.

Soon after the couple leased the bar, they moved to Norfolk, never returning to Charleston. Friends never knew the enterprise did not make money for them, she said.

Mrs. Walker said she did not have proof of exactly how her husband made contact with the Russians. "I can't prove it, but I can figure it out," she said. Asked if he had been recruited or he had volunteered, she replied: "I can't answer that now."

## Attempt to Dissuade Husband

Soon after she learned of his ties to Russians, she said, she tried to dissuade him in one dramatic conversation. "I only talked to him once about not doing it," she said. "That once I realized he was going to continue doing it."

Her husband's motivation, she said, was greed. "John is a very materialistic man," she said. "He could never understand why I couldn't care about the money, that money didn't have any meaning. I practically threw it away."

Despite her distaste for her husband's activities, their relationship was so close, she said, that they often discussed it, adding, "We talked about this frequently."

"Why did you talk about it?" she

asked rhetorically. "It was a way of life. It's adaptability, or you go stark raving mad." Immediately after he started what she called "his espionage," he took over the family finances that she had formerly controlled when he was at sea.

But by the early 1970's, the burden of concealing the secret began to take its toll on her.

"When John got involved in espionage — the lie, the lie — that's when I started drinking," she said.

At times, she said, she would rationalize her husband's behavior by telling herself that he was acting as a double agent. "I tried to convince myself that that was what he was doing, that he was being very patriotic," she said. "Of course, you'll search for any reason."

#### Perplexed at Motivation

She said that on the one hand she could understand his activities because he was so weak, but on the other hand she could not comprehend how, as an American, he could betray his country. "How can you protect the country on the one hand and rip it off on the other?" she said. "It always just amazed me."

By the time the family moved to California in the 1970's, first to San Diego and then to Union City, Mrs. Walker said she was beginning to become estranged from the usual social circuit of Navy wives. Even so, she said, she would throw cocktail parties and, in 1971, she organized a trip to Hong Kong for wives of Navy officers.

On two occasions, she said, she thought that her husband had been caught. Once, in Union City in 1973, a man came to the door and said he had some bad news, she recalled. "I thought John had had it," she said. In-

stead, she said, the man warned her husband to stop having an affair with his wife.

Later, in Norfolk, Va., she said she felt that her husband's executive officer knew what Mr. Walker was up to. But he was "not smart enough" to piece together her husband's activities, she said.

#### Expensive Tastes and Affairs

Increasingly, she said, her husband indulged his expensive tastes and conducted affairs with other women.

"He always tried to make me believe that he was going away for espionage, but that was a lie: it was a cover," she said of his affairs with women.

When she was in Hong Kong with him in 1971, he bought his first wig, or "his plastic hair," as she sarcastically referred to it. "He is bald and John Walker has a great fear of growing old," she said. The wigs cost \$300 apiece, she recalled. "I stopped keeping track of how often he bought hairpieces," she said.

Their last house in California was sold for a \$10,000 profit, providing the down payment for Mr. Walker's first plane, purchased when they moved back to Norfolk, Va., she said. On the move back east, she said, she drove a van hauling a 25-foot sloop of Mr. Walker's.

Mrs. Walker, after leaving rural Maine with an eighth grade education, met her future husband at a roller skating rink in Boston in 1956 when they were both 19. A girlfriend, she recalled, had persuaded her to visit the place, which sailors frequented.

"I met John that night," she recalled. "I didn't want anything to do with him. He was a sailor and didn't have a college degree. I let him drive me home but I wouldn't let him drop me in front of the house."

She recalled her first years with John Walker as happy ones. When the children were young, she said, they took movies of them acting in pantomimes and plays. Some of those movies were confiscated by the F.B.I., she said.

In 1965 they saved up and took a trip to France where they bought an MG sports car for \$1,200. "That was clean money," she remarked. Her husband, whom she described as an "ultra-conservative," urged her to join the John Birch Society, she said, and after some thought, she did. "I began to feel even more strongly about my country," she said.

In 1964 she voted for the Republican presidential candidate, Barry Goldwater, the last vote she has cast for a Federal office, she said.

"I've only voted once since John did what he did and that was at the state level," she said. "I didn't have the right. I relinquished the right. He continued to vote."

Mrs. Walker said she and her husband were divorced in 1976. By that time her drinking had become severe — usually scotch and water or vodka and water — and Mr. Walker's affairs with other women had become more frequent, she said. They had lived apart in Norfolk, she said, but he would often come to their home where she lived with the four children.

#### Walkers Are Divorced

When the divorce was final, she told her former husband she was leaving on a Friday but actually had the moving truck arrive on a Wednesday so that he walked into an empty house two days later. She took the four children to Skowhegan, Me., an old mill town that was as cold in winter as Norfolk was warm in summer. It was about as far as she could get away, and she had brothers and a sister there, she said.

Mr. Walker would call from time to time to ask about the family, she said. Finally, she agreed that Michael, who disliked New England, could go to Norfolk with his father where she felt he would get a better education.

Mr. Walker pestered all the children to go into either "the military or the police," she said.

The father wanted his son to enter the Seals, an elite Navy unit, but he did not have the qualifications, she said.

After her mother died in Maine, she said, she moved in July last year to this small town where her youngest daughter, Cynthia, and her 8-year-old son,

Thomas, had an apartment above a Christian book store.

Mrs. Walker said she took a vacation in Norfolk last August where her eldest daughter, Margaret, is a commercial artist and there, she saw her son for the last time before he was arrested. She also visited Mr. Walker.

When her daughter Laura got in touch with her in November "exactly one week before my birthday" on Nov. 23, she "called me out of the blue," Mrs. Walker said.

She said Laura had informed her of what she already knew: that Laura's estranged husband had custody of their son and was threatening to turn in John Walker if Laura ventured to take the boy.

After hearing from Laura, Mrs. Walker contemplated the call to the F.B.I. for several hours and had several drinks. She then called the operator and asked for a number for the bureau. She told an agent her story, she said, and then quickly picked up the telephone and called Arthur J. Walker, the brother of John Walker.

Mrs. Walker said she knew that Arthur Walker's was involved with John Walker's activities and called him as a way of sending a warning to her former husband. Arthur Walker was arrested after John Walker, on charges that he acted as a paid collaborator with his brother.

"I called Art to tell John I had turned him in," she said. "I thought he would go to Russia," she said.

It was several weeks, she said, before an F.B.I. agent from Hyannis, Walter Price, visited her in her apartment. Sometime after that the bureau gave her a lie-detector test and Mrs. Walker proudly recalls that the agent examining her concluded, "You have difficulty dealing with lies, don't you."

In April she visited her eldest daughter Margaret again in Norfolk.

Through all their years together and apart, she said, John Walker never believed she would act against him.

She finally agreed to see him in Norfolk, thinking she would talk to him in his car as it was parked outside her daughter's apartment, she said. Instead, once she got in the car he drove off and they talked at a fast-food restaurant.

"When I told John I didn't" turn him in, "he believed me," she said. "He said: 'You wouldn't want to see your 50-year-old husband in prison.'"